

Message Text

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 DOHA 01049 01 OF 02 110724Z
ACTION SIG-02

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /003 W
-----051269 110730Z /13C

R 101415Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY DOHA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2937

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 DOHA 1049

FOR INSPECTOR GENERAL FROM CHARGE

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ASIG
SUBJECT: EVALUATION OF THE CONSULAR FUNCTION

REF: STATE 208067

1. EMBASSY DOHA HAS SMALL CONSULAR SECTION (TWO OFFICERS, ONE LOCAL) AND WORKLOAD IS CORRESPONDINGLY SMALL, HOWEVER, WE FEEL OUR COMMENTS CAN BE ADDED TO THOSE OF LARGER POSTS. FOLLOWING NUMBERED PARAGRAPHS ARE KEYED TO PARAGRAPHS REFTEL.

1. LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY V AT PRESENT ADEQUATE. POST, HOWEVER, STRONGLY URGES THAT IF RPT IF AUTHORITY IS GIVEN TO WAIVE NIV'S IN LOW FRAUD COUNTRIES SUCH AS QATAR AND SAUDI ARABIA, THAT USG ATTEMPT TO EXERT MAXIMUM POSSIBLE TERMS FOR AMERICANS IN WAY OF RECIPROCITY. FOR PAST THREE YEARS, EMBASSY HAS ATTEMPTED WITHOUT SUCCESS TO OBTAIN LIBERALIZATION OF QATARI NIV'S FOR AMCITS. GOQ HAS NOT RESPONDED TO REQUESTS, SAYING PRIVATELY THAT TO PROVIDE AMCITS WITH FAVORED STATUS WOULD LEAD TO UNBEARABLE PRESSURE FROM OTHER NATIONS. IF USG WAIVED VISAS FOR QATARIS, PRESUMABLY GOQ COULD DM OQHB NPCQBIITS. (BRITISH NATIONALS ARE ALLOWED TO ENTER QATAR WITHOUT VISA FOR A MAXIMUM OF 30 DAYS. AMCITS REQUIRE VISAS WHICH REQUIRE CONSIDERABLE PAPERWORK AND DELAYS

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 DOHA 01049 01 OF 02 110724Z

AND ARE OFTEN VALID FOR ONLY 72 HOURS. THE BRITISH THEREFORE HAVE A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE WHICH EMBASSY HAS SOUGHT TO ELIMINATE.)

EMBASSY STRONGLY URGES THAT, BEFORE WAIVED NIV'S ARE GRANTED, FULL CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO THREATS IN TERMS OF TERRORISTS ENTERING THE U.S. IF CONSOFF SCREENING

IS ELIMINATED. SINCE THE MAJORITY OF VISA APPLICANTS MUST BE INTERVIEWED, ELIMINATING VISAS WOULD DROP ONE MORE BARRIER OF OUR DEFENSES FROM TERRORISTS. QATARI PPT'S WOULD BE RELATIVELY EASY TO ALTER OR FORGE. INS OFFICERS AT THE PORTS OF ENTRY IN U.S. CANNOT POSSIBLY HAVE THE LOCAL EXPERTISE TO DETECT FRAUD IN THE MANNER OF CONSOFFS BASED ABROAD.

EMBASSY IS ALSO FEARFUL THAT GOQ MIGHT USE THE ISSUANCE OF QATARI PPT'S OR TRAVEL DOCUMENTS TO EXPATRIATES AS A "PENSION PROGRAM" FOR LONG-TIME EMPLOYEES. GOQ HAS BEEN FAIRLY LIBERAL IN ISSUING TRAVEL DOCUMENTS TO EXPATRIATE EMPLOYEES (PALESTINIANS, EGYPTIANS, ETC.-NATIONALS WITH TRADITIONALLY HIGH ADJUSTMENT RATES). WERE THE GOQ TO ISSUE SUCH DOCUMENTS AFTER QATARIS WERE NO LONGER REQUIRED TO HAVE VISAS, MANY VISITS WOULD LIKELY BECOME ONE-WAY AND PROLONGED.

WE WOULD EXPECT PROBLEMS IN QATAR IF WAIVERS WERE GRANTED NEIGHBORING COUNTRY AND NOT QATAR.

2. PERSONNEL RESOURCES US AND LOCAL ARE ADEQUATE.

3. FUNDING ADEQUATE FOR ALL NEEDS.

4. CONSULAR PERSONNEL DO NOT PERCEIVE THEMSELVES AS SECOND CLASS CITIZENS AT THIS POST, HOWEVER, THEY UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 DOHA 01049 01 OF 02 110724Z

RECOGNIZE IN MANY LARGER POSTS SECOND CLASS STATUS FOR CONSULAR OFFICERS IS NORMAL SITUATION. AT THIS POST THERE HAS BEEN NO LACK OF INTEREST FROM AMBASSADOR TO CONSULAR SECTION.

5. CONSULAR OFFICERS ROUTINELY PARTICIPATE IN POST ASSESSMENTS OF POLICY AND IN DRAFTING POLICY MEMORANDA.

6. SINGLE LOCATION OF CONSULAR POST ADEQUATE TO PROVIDE EXPECTED SERVICES.

7. BACKSTOPPING FROM DEPARTMENT ADEQUATE IN MOST RESPECTS, HOWEVER, SUPPLY OF FORMS NOT ADEQUATE. LONG DELAYS IN RECEIPT OF FORMS ORDERED FROM DEPARTMENT ARE NORMAL AND BORROWING FROM OTHER NEARBY POSTS IS ROUTINE.

8. OFFICE SPACE FOR CONSULAR SECTION IS LOCATED IN MAIN EMBASSY BUILDING AND IS ADEQUATE. FURNISHINGS AND OFFICE EQUIPMENT ARE ADEQUATE.

9. CONSULAR OFFICERS AT POST CLEARLY UNDERSTAND

RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER PRIVACY ACT AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT. THEY DO FEEL INHIBITED IN PERFORMANCE OF THEIR DUTIES BY THESE ACTS, HOWEVER, THAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE ACTS. FOR EXAMPLE, ROUTINE LISTING OF

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PAGE 01 DOHA 01049 02 OF 02 110716Z
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UNCLAS SECTION 2 OF 2 DOHA 1049

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MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF SUCH LISTS NOW REQUIRES SEEKING PERMISSION FROM PERSONS LISTED. WE DO NOT PERCEIVE THIS AS A GREAT DIFFICULTY AND RECOGNIZE THAT PRIVACY ACT WAS DESIGNED FOR PURPOSES SUCH AS THESE. WE HAVE HAD NO REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT.

10. WE EXPECT VOLUME OF CONSULAR WORK TO INCREASE AS INTERCHANGE BETWEEN QATAR AND US INCREASES. WE DO EXPECT, HOWEVER, THAT VOLUME OF NON-IMMIGRANT VISA APPLICATIONS WILL DECREASE DUE TO RECENTLY GRANTED PERMISSION TO ISSUE FOUR-YEAR MULTIPLE ENTRY STUDENT VISAS.

11. CONSULAR PACKAGE SERVES WELL AS MEANS OF MAKING RESOURCE NEEDS KNOWN TO DEPARTMENT. ADDITIONAL BYPRODUCT OF PREPARATION OF CONSULAR PACKAGE IS FORCED EVALUATION OF OUR LOCAL PROBLEMS BY OURSELVES. ON SPECIFIC QUESTION ABOUT QUANTIFYING PROTECTION AND WELFARE WORK, WE HAVE NO PROBLEM QUANTIFYING SUCH WORK IN DOHA SINCE WE ARE SELDOM CALLED UPON TO PROVIDE PROTECTION OR WELFARE SERVICES, HOWEVER, OFFICERS WITH EXPERIENCE IN CONSULAR SECTIONS IN LARGER POSTS ALL AGREE THAT QUANTIFICATION OF PROTECTION AND WELFARE WORK IS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE WHEN MORE THAN MINIMAL DEMANDS FOR SUCH SERVICES ARE MADE ON CONSULAR STAFF.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 DOHA 01049 02 OF 02 110716Z

12. CONSULAR OFFICERS DO RECEIVE ADEQUATE COOPERATION FROM RESIDENT AMERICANS AND LOCAL OFFICIALS. EMBASSY HAS TAKEN SPECIFIC STEPS TO PROMOTE SUCH COOPERATION ON ALL LEVELS. IT SHOULD BE NOTED HOWEVER THAT THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A SERIOUS PROBLEM IN OBTAINING COOPERATION IN QATAR SO EMBASSY STEPS HAVE NOT BEEN EXTENSIVE.

13. CONSULAR OPERATIONS IN QATAR GENERALLY SUPPORT BILATERAL RELATIONS. ONLY PROBLEM THAT HAS COME UP HAS BEEN OVER RECENT (WELL FOUNDED) DECISION TO ELIMINATE A-2 VISAS FOR QATARI STUDENTS. WE FEEL THAT THIS PROBLEM CAN BE HANDLED WITH MINIMAL DISLOCATION TO RELATIONS AND THAT NO SERIOUS DISRUPTION IN RELATIONS CAN BE ANTICIPATED. WE FEEL THAT LACK OF PROTECTION IN WELFARE CASES HAS MEANT THAT THERE HAVE BEEN FEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR FRICTION TO DEVELOP BETWEEN EMBASSY CONSULAR OFFICIALS AND QATARI GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

14. EMBASSY FEELS IT HIGHLY DESIRABLE FOR DEPT TO COORDINATE MOVES ON RECIPROCITY WITH POST IN ADVANCE. RECENT UNILATERAL DECISION BY DEPT TO ALLOW FOUR YEAR, MULTIPLE ENTRY F-1 VISAS FOR QATARIS, WHILE SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCING NIV WORKLOAD WAS INITIATED WITHOUT PRIOR CONSULTATIONS WITH POST AND HAS HINDERED POST EFFORTS TO IMPROVE AMCIT VISA PROBLEMS.

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